

soned Soldiers to sharpen their skills on their vehicles and introducing new Soldiers to the equipment integral to the engineers' mission aid in building the units' competence.

"This is the time they have to crawl, walk and run," said Coats, referring to the Soldiers guiding their vehicles and tramping through the mounds of earth piled high at Campo Pond. "We never know what the mission will be but we will be ready."

Through this training, building technical and tactical competence rests on one underlying theme of this DIGEX: teamwork.

"We are here to re-bond people," explained 1st Lt. Michelle Gramling, assistant S-3, training and operations officer for the Catamounts of the 16th EN. After 15 months of deployment to Iraq and the redeployment of the division to Germany, many fresh faces have filtered into the ranks of the divisions' engineers. Along with the gain of new Soldiers came the loss of valuable experience as Soldiers changed duty station or left the Army.

Even as the engineer units adapted to new callings, Iron Soldiers had to evolve with the change in personnel.

"We lost valuable experience after the deployment," said Spc. Shaun Ivey, ACE operator, Co. C, 16th EN. "We had to step up and take charge. We are going to pass on what we know to the new guys."



Spc. Saul Blanco, Co. C, 40th EN, pushes earth from the bottom of a an armored vehicle fighting position as he completes his qualification as an ACE operator.